

Members are advised that the text should be available for their review on the Web sites of the committees of jurisdiction and of the Committee on Rules by Monday, April 7, which I guess is today.

Members should use the Office of Legislative Counsel to ensure their amendments are drafted in the most appropriate format. Members are also advised to talk with the Office of the Parliamentarian to be certain that their amendments comply with the rules of the House.

AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURGESS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. MCINNIS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, good evening to my colleagues. I appreciate the opportunity to address our group this evening.

There are a number of different issues I want to talk about, but the issues I am going to talk about are going to focus on one thing, and that is America.

I come back from a weekend in Colorado, spending time with my constituents out there, constituents of all different types of backgrounds. I can tell my colleagues that the morale in America, the patriotism in America I do not think could be stronger. These people that are against this war, I have some appreciation of some of their thoughts; but I want the Members to know that the people that are making all these anti-U.S. statements within the borders of this country I am absolutely convinced are a very small part of our population.

I am very impressed, very impressed, with the amount of support, overwhelming support, for the troops of the United States of America. Thank God we are Americans. I feel so good about that. I want to tell my colleagues, on the back of my pickup I have a bumper sticker. My colleagues have all seen it before. A lot of my colleagues may have it on the back of their pick up or their car. It is pretty simple. It says: "America, love it or leave it." That is not a bumper sticker that defies anybody's right for their freedom of speech under the first amendment.

In fact, we know here on this House floor we have lots of debate on this House floor. We are very intense debate. It is one of the checks and balances in the government that we have of this country, but it at some point in time even on this House floor no matter how intense the debate is, with very few exceptions, at that point people on this floor I can say almost unanimously, almost unanimously, love this country, and I see no reason to be apologetic, no reason to be apologetic for saying to people if they do not love America, leave it. There are lots of choices in this world, but one does

not have to go very far from American borders to understand that this is the one Nation of the few nations in the world that do not have a problem with people leaving. Our big problem is so many people want to come into this country because they understand the fundamental principles that have made this country so great, that have made this country stand out in world history as the leading country for democracy, as the country greater than any other country in recorded history, the country that has done more for its neighbors, as one of the few countries in history, after it goes to war or moves into other people's territory, as Colin Powell, our Secretary of State, so justifiably said the other day, the only time that the United States of America has kept territory in a foreign country was under a request for someplace to bury our soldiers.

This country has got a lot to be proud of, and I carry that bumper stick with a great deal of pride, "America, love it or leave it." And I can tell my colleagues there are a lot of people in this country, by far the overwhelming majority, they love this country, and they love what this country stands for, and they support the troops of the United States of America.

I know we have got some people out there, and I am going to address some of their issues, some protesters out there that are not only not supporting the troops of the United States of America, but in California and in other places in this Nation, they are actually carrying signs that say: "We support our troops as long as they shoot their officers." "We support our troops as long as they shoot our officers." It is an absolute disgrace.

We have other people who, for self-interest, frankly, on the Democratic side, very limited but on that side who are seeking the office of President itself who stand out there and say we need a regime change in this country.

Let me tell my colleagues about the administration that we have, in my opinion, running this country. George W. Bush, I think he is doing an outstanding job. What President in history has had two wars, has had a September 11, has lost the Space Shuttle, was handed a bad economy and it is still going south? The strength of our President is second to none. The strength of our President is what will lead this country through this fog, and I can tell my colleagues that when the storm came in, when the conditions got nasty, we did not see our President anchor the boat at the dock where it was the safest. We saw our President turn that boat into the storm to guide people through the storm.

In my opinion and I want to tell my colleagues in the opinion of Democrat and Republican, in my travels, in my calls, in my contacts throughout this country, Democrat and Republican admire the President that we have. They think this President is up to the job. They think this President is leading

the country in the right direction. They think this President is doing the right thing in taking out of power the worst mass murderer in the history of the world and, by the way, the worst mass murderer of Muslims. Saddam Hussein has killed more Muslims than any other man known in recorded world history, and that effort to take him out is being led by our President.

By the way, I do not want to downplay the assistance we are getting from our allies. I have time after time after time read in newspapers or heard people say this is the United States picking a fight. As Worley says in his song "Have you Forgotten?" which is the number one song on the country hits, after September 11 maybe we are out there looking to resolve this situation, but the fact is it is not the United States standing alone. In fact, if we take a look at the coalition that our President and his cabinet has put together, it is very impressive. Our longtime solid allies, Tony Blair and the British, and Tony Blair, if my colleagues want to take a look at an example of a profile in courage, we have got it right there. The British, the United Kingdom, a country that has long understood freedom, a country that has very judiciously, very judiciously, used their military might for good and just causes.

And then we can go on to the European continent, and I hear people say this is a split between the United States and Europe. It is not a split between the United States and Europe. It is a split between the United States and the French, the United States and the German leadership, the United States and Belgium; but it is not a split between Europe. Jacques Chirac would like us to think that France is Europe. Jacques Chirac would tell the other countries in Europe that France is the ruling country of Europe and that when France speaks, it is as if it is the voice for Europe, and it is not. In fact, we have more countries in Europe that support the United States of America and our position than support the position of the French.

Take a look at it. We can start with the British. We can go to the Italians. We can go to the Spanish. We can go to the Polish. We can go to the Netherlands. We can go to Australia. Throughout the world nations throughout this world and their leadership recognize that the mission undertaken by the United States and that willing coalition is the mission that is correct. It is the mission for the right cause, and it is the right time to undertake that mission.

We have strong support, strong support amongst our allies. This is not the United States acting alone, although I will tell my colleagues that our country must always be prepared, must always be prepared because of our strength, because of our leadership, because of our history of democracy, we must always be prepared to act for the interests of humanity even if it means

acting alone that we will find in our history. To the best of my knowledge, I do not remember anytime in our history that the United States has ever had to act alone. Why? Why does the United States not have to act alone including in the current war that we are involved? It is really pretty simple. It is because the causes that this country acts on, it is on the right side. It acts for the right reasons. It goes forward with the right intentions; and when we are right, when we have got the right cause, when we are headed in the right direction, it is easy for other countries to support us because other countries too, being right is not exclusive to the United States of America and being strong and having the might to help your friends and to help people that are under the wicked hands of somebody like Saddam Hussein, in my opinion it is a pretty easy decision to make. The French walked away from it. The Germans walked away from it. The Belgians walked away from it. But the countries that stood tall, that came out of that foxhole to take the fire to get rid of the evil empire over there, those countries are right too.

This is a coalition of the willing, and I will tell my colleagues thank goodness we have got a President who is willing to stand up and take the heat, take the protest, take the derogatory remarks, take the editorials, take all the political correctness that they try to aim against him, and yet he has stayed steady as she goes. He is on course. He knows in his own mind what needs to be done to protect not only the United States of America but to protect the world.

Right here on this House floor from this very seat, and I was sitting right out here and many of my colleagues were sitting right out here, the President said freedom is not a gift to the United States or exclusive to the United States; it is a gift to humanity, a gift given to the United States to carry out for humanity. That is paraphrased a little, but that is exactly on point.

Take a look at what else we have with the President. Take a look at our team. Condoleezza Rice, recognized as one of the experts in the entire world on international affairs, and, by the way, I boast with some pride a Colorado product, she went to school in Denver, Colorado. Take a look at our vice President, Dick Cheney, very methodical, very experienced in these types of areas. I think one of the most well thought-out Vice Presidents this country has ever had. Take a look at Colin Powell, clearly, clearly recognized as one of the most respected men in the world. Dick Rumsfeld, the youngest Secretary of Defense we have ever had, the oldest Secretary of Defense we have ever had, somebody who fits the part in the Department of Defense perfectly, in my opinion.

□ 2100

We have got the dream team out there. We have got the team that has led this.

Remember how in Afghanistan, Afghanistan now, not Iraq, but remember how with Afghanistan we were hardly into our mission, hardly into our mission, before some of the national publications, the national press, some of it, came out and said, oh, my gosh, the United States is going to face stunning defeat. The United States underestimated the power of the Taliban, that brought down the Russian empire when they came in and tried to take over, chased them out of Afghanistan, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. They have done the same thing with Iraq.

A week and a half ago, take a look at what the headlines were saying. They were talking about retreat, some of them. They were talking about how the United States greatly misjudged this, the United States has slowed down so much, the United States has been stopped. They really clearly underestimated the strength of Saddam Hussein and the dedication to his tyranny in the country.

How interesting a week changes these newspapers. Now, all of a sudden, they are out there saying this is one of the greatest military triumphs we have seen.

The battle is not over, but the United States and our troops over there, and our troops in the United States, by the way, have done a tremendous job. And what is different about this than Vietnam? I can tell you, in this war and in, I hope, all conflicts in the future, when our military people come home, or when we see military people on the street, they will be recognized as heroes. I cannot wait to put my arms around some of these young soldiers when they come home, back home to Colorado or Mississippi or Texas or whatever State. We are so, so darn proud of them. That is why I do not have any reluctance at all, as a U.S. Congressman, I have no reluctance at all when I drive around to have a bumper sticker on the back of my pickup that says "America: Love it or leave it."

I do not often get tears in my eyes. I do not know why it is, because I do have emotion, I have deep emotion. I have love, I have belief in a God, I have deep emotion, but I do not often tear up. But I have to tell you this weekend I teared up.

What a wonderful thing our military did, not only what they did, but what it is representative of. I am talking about the rescue of our prisoner of war, Jessica Lynch. And what made me tear up when I read the words. Here she is: She has had her bones broken, she has been shot, I would assume she probably saw the execution of her fellow soldiers. What a traumatic event. Now she is a prisoner of war.

All of a sudden, our soldier, our Jessica Lynch, and Jessica Lynch could be any soldier from any State, laying in

that hospital bed, hears a racket, hears noise in the hospital. As the reports say, she puts her head under the sheet, and all of a sudden she hears a voice. "We are United States soldiers. We are here to protect you and we are here to take you home."

Imagine that. Your name, Jessica Lynch. That is what first happened. "Jessica Lynch. We are United States soldiers. We are here to protect you. We are here to take you home."

Bless her heart. She sticks her head out of the sheet and she says, "I am an American soldier too. Do not let anybody leave me."

Jessica Lynch is a face, as I said earlier, you could put on any military uniform in our country. What is so neat about this story is not only the rescue, but the fact that an American soldier never leaves an American soldier behind. We always go back and get our people, and we will continue to go back and get our people.

But what is really significant about this is what it says, what America will do for another human being. And it is not just restricted to the soldiers. I can tell you that there are a lot of citizens of the country of Iraq that, once they know we are really there and that Saddam Hussein is really gone, they will feel the same comfort of freedom and the same comfort of security that Pfc. Lynch felt when her fellow soldiers came to take her home.

What a neat story. And what a neat story about what the American fighting man and woman has done for a country many, many miles away from the border of our own.

Sure we have a lot of self-interest in this. We do not want a mass murderer like Saddam Hussein with weapons of mass destruction. We do not want the worst killer in the history of the world, that has been the worst killer of Muslims, one of the worst mass murderers ever known, we do not want him to have those weapons. We know this individual has gassed his own people, 60,000 people in one incident; and, thank goodness, yesterday we drove a stake through the heart of his lead officer in charge of those kinds of programs, those programs of ricin, of nerve gas, of mustard gas. He died yesterday. We drove a stake through his heart, and Saddam Hussein is not far behind.

So, sure, we have self-interest. We know what would happen in Iraq. If we did not handle Iraq today, it would be North Korea tomorrow. We realized in this generation, through the leadership of our President, and, frankly, through the leadership of most of us on this House floor, we recognized the time to stand up, the time to fight, had arrived.

We were not like the French, that said negotiate, negotiate, negotiate. We were not like the Germans, that, for political purposes, for self-serving political purposes for the office of the president, ran and hid.

The United States stood up, and our men and women stood up; and we stood

up, as I said, not just for our own self-interest and the interests of the world to rid them of this person, but we stood up for the values of freedom, the values of democracy, the values of just fundamental, basic human rights for the people of Iraq. We stood up for the people of Iraq.

It is the American soldier, the British soldier, even the Polish soldier and the Australian soldiers, that got out of that foxhole and have come into Iraq to give the people of Iraq the basic and fundamental principles of human rights, of human decency, of freedom, freedom of some expression.

We have got an awful lot to be proud of. And this rescue over the last few days, man, am I proud of those people. Look at these soldiers here. They went to work. And look at the success, the successes that we have had.

Sure, we are going to take more casualties. This thing is far from over.

And we will rebuild this country. Not under the guidelines of the French, not under the guidelines of the Germans, not under the guidelines of the Russians or the United Nations, but under the guidelines of the United States, of the British, for a short period of time, and then under the guidelines of the people of Iraq.

This Nation and our willing coalition will allow the people of Iraq, for the first time in many, many, many moons, for the first time in many, many, many years, to allow the people of Iraq to have a real government that represents them, a government of the people, by the people and for the people. And that would not have happened, that would not have happened if nations throughout this world had not been willing to stand up at the sacrifice of losing their own people. That would not have happened had we and that willing coalition not stood up.

Imagine where we would be, imagine where the people of Iraq would be, 5 years from now had this willing coalition not stood up. Imagine where we would be, just like Chamberlain should have imagined where we would be in 1938 with Hitler. Imagine where we would be 5 years from now if we followed the French philosophy or the German philosophy in dealing with the country of Iraq and dealing with other problems throughout the world where we have tyrants that have in their hands weapons of mass destruction. And they have used them time and time and time again, and they have continued to defy international law and they have continued to defy the international community.

We are on the right track. We are fighting for the right cause. We have not only the finest military in the world, we have the finest military in the history of the world, and every member of our military, whether you are stationed domestically, whether you are sitting out there on a ship, whether you are in transit, whether you are in South Korea, whether you are in the Philippines or Kuwait or

Iraq, every member of the armed services of the United States of America can wear that uniform proudly. And I want every one of you to know that my colleagues, all of us here, we are so, so deeply indebted to and so proud of you.

The symbol of what you will carry to the next generation is that this Nation is willing to stand up for what is right and stand against what is wrong. There is a lot to be said in that message. And that rescue this weekend, it made all of us feel good.

But take a look at what it meant on a broader basis. That is what we are doing for the Iraqi people. We are freeing the Iraqi people. We are going to bring stability to that country. We are going to bring economic bliss. These people are going to get to enjoy material things we take for granted in this country. And it is in large part due to the leadership of our President, and in large part due to the dedication and sacrifice of our military forces, and in large part, in large part due to the patriotism of America to the average Joe and the average Jane on the street that say, America will stand for what it believes, America will help its allies, America will help its friends, America is a country that will go into history, into the future as well as our past, as the finest country in the history of the world.

And I am proud of it, and I am proud to have that bumper sticker on the back of my pickup, "America: Love it or leave it."

I want to mention a couple of other things. I am not trying to trivialize or treat lightly the difficulties that we have had with the French. I know that lately there have been efforts to change the word from "French toast" to "freedom toast," or figure out some other name on the menu, and not to do this or that with the French, and I understand that. There is a lot of anger back here.

There is a lot of anger with the American citizens about a country like France. It is kind of a luxury society. They get the benefits. They get the benefits of a lot of security that is provided by their neighbors. They get the benefits of a capitalist economic society. But they get the luxury of never having to come out of the foxhole.

But I have got to tell you, last week I did become aggressive in one area dealing with French products. I found out, and for the sake of open disclosure, my district is in the mountains of Colorado. We have a community in Colorado named Marble, Colorado, for obvious reasons, there is a marble quarry up there in that community. That quarry has provided marble for many things, including some of the steps here at the Capitol, many of the monuments, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It is a very fine marble.

In discussing a call instituted by them, in discussions with some of the people in this company, which, by the way, is owned by the Swiss, and the other marble company in this country,

there is one owned by the Italians, they said, "Geez, do you know who supplies the tombstone for the Department of Defense to put over the graves of our fallen soldiers?" Of course we did not. The French.

When I heard that, I took it personally. I think it is wrong. I think it is inappropriate, considering what the French Government has done to this country, how they have kicked sand in the face of their friend; how in a time of adversity, they put their ship safe in the harbor and threatened our ship out there and our willing coalition.

We can handle it without them, but they left us. They left us when it was the most important time for them to be with us, that is when they left us.

Now I find out that our Department of Defense is purchasing the tombstones that we place over the graves of our fallen soldiers from a French company.

I have asked the Department of Defense, as the contract comes up for renewal in July, at least the Swiss were neutral, and the Italians are part of the willing coalition. The Italians have been a great country. They understood the evil we are dealing with. These are the kinds of countries that should be rewarded, not the French.

It is the same thing when we go and rebuild Iraq. The French should not be rewarded for their belligerent attitude, for the fact they hid as far down in the foxhole as they could get from the tough fight taking place outside the foxhole.

So I wanted to explain to some of my colleagues, this is not just trying to take a cheap shot or for some other reason to bring out this issue. The fact is, American soldiers should not be buried under tombstones purchased from a French company.

I want to visit for just a few moments, and then probably the most exciting part of my comments tonight are some of the letters that I want to read to you from some of our soldiers, some of the thoughts about this conflict, this war we are engaged in.

□ 2115

First of all, I think the protests in this country, the anti-American troop attitude, the expressions by Presidential aspirants that we need a regime change, and some of our colleagues on this House floor way over on the left side, objecting to what is happening here, that is not representative of the majority of the people of America. I do not take away, to an extent, I do not take away the right for debate. I think it is so fundamentally important for the checks and balances of our country. I do not take away, even if I disagree, I do not take away the right, if somebody disagrees with me, to debate on this floor or to walk in a protest. But as my colleagues know, there comes a point in time where we as a team must act together. There is a saying around here: politics ends at our country's borders. In other words, in

Congress, we have always said, look, when we go to battle outside, like a family, like a family dispute, when we step outside the family home, when we step outside the borders of this Nation, we must act as a Nation. We must act as a family. We must speak as a family. Let the politics and the debate stay within our borders.

Unfortunately, a small number of people, especially when we consider it in proportion to the population of this Nation, or if we consider even a more accurate number, if we consider the number of protests in proportion to the percentage of this country that supports our forces and supports the difference between right and wrong and the just cause of which we are engaged, it is minuscule. These protestors are really not representative of the majority of America.

I want to tell my colleagues, where they cross, in my opinion, where they cross the line of patriotic and unpatriotic. I do not think that one can say somebody is unpatriotic, for gosh sakes, because they protest. I do not think that is unpatriotic. As I have said earlier, there is freedom of speech. But there is at some point where one carries that protest to that line or one crosses that line where it does cross the line between being patriotic and unpatriotic. And let me come back to my remarks that I made at the beginning, and that is those protesters, disgraceful, what they have done. Those protesters, and I have pictures of it right here, those protesters that carry signs out there that say, we support our troops, we support our troops, as long as they shoot their officers. Those are the kinds of people that my bumper sticker applies to. If you do not love America, get out of it. Leave America.

And I am not ashamed, I am not concerned about standing up here and saying to my colleagues, in my judgment, and I think in the judgment of many people of this country, it is unpatriotic for one to stand out there when our forces, when our young men and women throughout this country and overseas, overseas actually taking bullets or being scared to death or being asked to carry out a mission so that we have the freedom to protest, that one would dare have the audacity, the unpatriotism to carry a sign that says, "I support our troops as long as they shoot their officers." Those people, in my opinion, have no place in our society. They do not, thank goodness, carry behind them much support. It is very limited. But it is so disgraceful in its public display, so disgraceful in its public display that I come to the House floor this evening to condemn as unpatriotic that particular sign and those people who do not support the troops of America.

In fact, every protester out there, many people, by the way, who I would describe as luxury, the life of luxury. They are not taking bullets. They are not worried about their security. We all go to sleep tonight not worried

about our security. We all go to the grocery store tomorrow not worried about whether there is food there. We have less worry about medical conditions than other people in the world because we have such a fine medical establishment. We do not worry about whether our kids have a school to go to in the morning. We really have a life of luxury. But that life of luxury in large part is given to us by the dedication of the American forces, by the dedication of the American forces that are willing to risk everything they have, including their own lives, so that we have that life of luxury.

It is my humble opinion that when those forces hit the field in combat, that the signs of protest ought to go down and those signs that ought to go up is "God bless the American forces." God bless our men and women who are willing to go out there, not for their own self interests, but for the interests of the country that they love, for the interests of America. For the interests of America's interests. For the interests of America's allies. For the humanity, for the interests of humanity; in the interest of freedom, of freedom and the export of freedom. They are willing to go out there and put their lives on the line.

We know, we know, many lives, many lives have now been lost in the last couple of weeks as a result of carrying that torch, the torch of America's gift to its people, and the gift of its people to America, and that is freedom and democracy. Yet we have people, people in our own circle, people in our own camp that not only do not help gather firewood for the fire, but have the audacity to carry a sign, carry lots of signs that say, we support our troops when they shoot our officers. That is going too far. That is going over the line.

I know when I get back to my office this evening I am going to have lots of phone calls, primarily from these kinds of people, yelling at me that I am an unpatriotic American. How dare they, as if I have no freedom of speech, but how dare I question their motives when they carry a sign that says "We support our troops as long as they shoot our officers." Well, I say to them, save your time. It is a waste of a phone call. Instead, think of that bumper sticker that I have on the back of my pickup: "America, love it or leave it." The intensity that I feel is not just with me. We see that throughout this country. People are so proud today to be Americans and our military people are so proud of their Nation and so proud of being in uniform for this country.

I was at a high school not too long ago and at the high school one of the students asked me, he said, are they going to bring back the draft? I said, the draft, now that we have a little time out of the draft, we now realize it was probably the worst mistake we ever made in this country. Why? Because in the draft, keep in mind, we did not offer any choice. We would go to

young men and women who had just gotten out of high school, maybe had started a career, say, being a mechanic, something that they really wanted to be, or going to college or doing something they really wanted to do, and all of a sudden their government was knocking on their door saying, whether you want to or not, you are being drafted, you have to leave your home, we are going to send you out in the military forces and we may have you painting ships or doing something they despise. Do you think our military is happy? Do you think morale in the military is good when we have a draft? It is not.

What we have today is a different concept; and if you go back and look at the history in the articles about getting rid of the draft and so on, nobody estimated just what a tremendous success it would be, getting rid of the draft and having an all-volunteer force, men and women who want to serve this country, men and women who want to put that uniform on. Men and women who wanted to be where they were going to be sent by our Commander in Chief.

I think we are going to see that reflected by any number of letters that I have right here, and I want to take a few minutes to read some of them. Our military, the morale in our military is as high as it has ever been, in part because of their deep, deep dedication to this country that has been so good to them and so good to all of us, in part because of the leadership of our Commander in Chief, and in smaller part because of the leadership of the United States Congress and elected officials and leaders throughout this country. We have come together as a family. We have spoken with a very strong voice, a voice that is recognized wherever those Stars and Stripes fly.

Now, granted, we should not be distracted for very long by a few small groups of protesters that have, in an unpatriotic way, in a belligerent fashion, carried signs that say, "We support our troops, as long as they shoot their officers."

I have really been moved by some of the letters that we have seen. I wanted to read a couple of them. I think they are so neat. As I have said before, I do not like to read from written text, but these are not my letters. These are letters that I am passing on to my colleagues. Let me start:

"We are the proud parents of two United States Marines."

By the way, at one of my events this weekend, I met the mother of two proud, I am not sure if they were Marines or Army officers or a mixture. Boy, was that mother proud. She stood up in front of this group, and she said, please, the best message I can take back to my sons, a son and a daughter, the best message I can take back to my children is that we in this country understand why they are fighting, that we in this country support what they are doing for us. She said, that is all

that is necessary. You do not need to send a care package. She did say prayers, but she said prayer, and let them know that we understand why they are there and that we too have the deep faith in them and the love for this country that they have. It is pretty moving.

"We are the proud parents of two U.S. Marines. We will not bother discussing our political views, one party versus another. What we will say is we do not want our sons nor any of our sons and daughters, husbands, wives and grandchildren in our extended military family to die in vain. Like most, we pray for peace, but we are sick, literally sick. Why? Because we lived through the Vietnam era and saw firsthand how our vets were treated. We are so afraid it is beginning to happen again, and we are not alone. Nor are we the only ones who believe with all of our heart that the key to winning any war on terrorism will depend on how we here at home emotionally support our troops, regardless of politics. Vietnam proved how we defeated ourselves by the way we divided our own Nation and treated our troops. We never lost the battle in Vietnam, we lost the battle on the political front. We are beginning to lose again and the bullets have yet to fly."

Now, I should note that this letter was written prior to the engagement of the conflict, about 3 weeks ago. I would also note that the mother who wrote this letter is today, I am sure, so, so proud of the overwhelming patriotism and support that is being shown by the American people for her two proud Marines and all of those who have chosen to serve in our military.

"Our sons did not choose to become a United States Marine to kill people. They had dreams of a career, of travel, and of protecting us from the terror of things like 9-11 so that it would never happen again. Both our sons are the best sons a parent could pray for. The thought of having someone throwing animal feces on our military when they finally return home, hearing nothing but negative media about how Americans hate them and the war, and the thought of what we would do to the servicemen and women's spirit scares military families to the point of sleepless nights. The media, stronger than the White House itself, can help change that fear, can help it from becoming a reality. Everyone is quick to show the protesters out marching. What has been done to show those who support our troops? We are not marching on the streets, we are not screaming clever chants, we are not holding up signs or throwing blame or calling names. No, we military families, we are at home. We are boxing care packages to our service people. We put yellow ribbons on our doors, on our trees, on our car antennas, Blue Star flags in our windows. We pray 100 times a day and light a candle. We are sending birthday cards, thank you notes of cheer to the members of the service whom we have

never met, nor may ever, because they are our extended family in that military force.

"They need to know amidst some of this bad publicity, there are those of us who are grateful for their choice and sacrifice for us to live in the land of the free, and it is because of the brave that we have the land of the free. You may never read that in the headlines. So what can be done?"

And she goes on to talk about how we can come together in our communities in their prayer and in their showing of support for our soldiers. And keep in mind, it is not just the soldiers that are on the front. Think of all of the supplies, all of the logistics that have to happen from people across this Nation, soldiers and citizens, civilian military employees, the prayer from us.

□ 2130

Look at all the supplies that have to be put together. Look at all our medical personnel. In Washington, D.C., we have servicemen, and when I say that, servicemen and servicewomen, we have service people who are now recuperating in our hospitals here in Washington, D.C., at our military hospitals. There are a lot of heroes out there.

I get the deep sense in this country that this country has responded totally opposite of the response that we saw in the Vietnam-era war. This country has come to its feet. This country will recognize and has recognized, and will greet with great cheer and great love and great pride our American soldiers when they come home.

This lady's concern about the Vietnam era and the way those service people were treated should be of no more concern. We have a few pockets of poorly educated, unpatriotic people who carry signs that the best way to support troops is to shoot their officers, but such a small fraction. We have a massive, massive amount of people that will stand in respect to these military people for the job that they have done and for the job that they will do not only today, but in the future.

Let me move on to another letter. This one is from Petty Officer Lance Herdon of Brandon, Mississippi. I am just taking out a part of the letter. Frankly, some of the letters have some pretty emotional, private stuff for the family, but with this, I do not think they have objection to it being read.

From the petty officer: "As far as questions about the protesters, yes, I am angered about the protesters. But, that is why we are here. We are the very ones that give them the rights to speak freely. I still don't understand how the very people who speak so badly about us and what we are out here trying to preserve are the ones who use it the most.

"To answer your previous questions, I did watch the President's speech. There was about 20 of us glued to the

television screen on the bridge. I don't understand what is left to show people. What I mean by that is the fact they have mass weapons of destruction and they refuse to destroy them. So that means that they could inflict serious harm on surrounding countries. Why should we not help the surrounding countries? I completely believe in liberating the people of Iraq. Give them one thing that we most often take for granted . . . freedom."

This 19-year-old petty officer says, "Give them the one thing that we most often take for granted . . . freedom." It is something that is overlooked, a major right we hold as Americans.

"For everyone in Mississippi—keep on keeping on. Everyone's support has been monumental so far. There are a lot of people that think that this is not necessary, but I think of it as a responsibility to mankind."

This is coming from a 19-year-old petty officer. "I think of it as a responsibility to mankind." The key word is freedom.

"I think that it is ironic that Abraham Lincoln was famous for freeing the slaves 200 years ago. I am on the USS *Abraham Lincoln* trying to free the people of Iraq. I am surprised no one else has said anything to that effect." It has been said, petty officer. "I don't see how anyone cannot want to free the people of Iraq."

Another one here from a desert battlefield far from home, a U.S. military officer sent his wife a love letter describing how his wedding ring has soothed him. It reminded him of her, although they are many miles apart.

"Every day I find myself fidgeting with my ring. The smoothness of its surface calms me," Captain Scott Smith wrote to his wife, Kelly. "I can't fully describe what I'm feeling. I'm no poet, but its lightness, its beauty remind me of you. Its hardness is a sign of your strength. Love, you are my rock. You are what I live for."

Think of the sacrifice, not only of these military men, but the military families, these young wives or husbands whose spouse is out there fighting for us. Think of the emotions.

Do Members remember the songs from World War II? "I'll see you in all the old familiar places," or "Kiss me once and kiss me twice," that kind of stuff, it is all there. The love for these troops is so deep and so intense, as reflected by letters like this.

Here is another letter: "Army Pfc. Favio Melendez, Jr., with the Patriot unit from the 108th in Fort Bliss, Texas.

He wrote to his wife:

"Dear Babe, my journey back home is about to begin. The war would've been halfway over by the time you get this letter. I love you and miss you. If anything happens to me, remember I'll always love you. I'll always be with you. Tell everybody back home thank you for the letters and for the prayers. I'll see them soon.

"Tell my parents they have raised a proud American son. Tell my sister to

achieve her goals, for I have fought for them. Pray for those soldiers who have lost their lives for our freedom and pray for those who continue to fight to make the world a better place.

"I made a promise to you before I left, that I shall return . . . it's rough and tough out here, but I'll keep that promise.

"Take care of our son, and let him know who his daddy is. I'll see you soon. P.F.C. Melendez."

Here is another one, Brian Waninger to his wife Melena. "Today has been eventful, as you can imagine. We are all fine. Have a prayer chain started. I know that it works. Pray for the President. He is a brave man to have made these decisions and I am sure that he will face adversity. He will need a lot of support to stay strong. I say, get the wives together and protest the protesters. The men of Charlie Company are in good spirits and proud to be here. Pass it on. I love you and you are on my mind constantly. Love, Brian."

I want to mention another one. This is an obituary. There is one line in the obituary that really stuck out. "George A. Fernandez, 36, a member of the Army's Special Operation Command, died Wednesday after being shot in northern Iraq, the Defense Department said."

Think of this statement. This statement comes from his family. Think of the strength of a family to stand up and say something like this. They said he was the third generation of his family to serve as a senior noncommissioned officer.

"He served not only out of a sense of family obligation, but out of a sense of patriotic duty. He loved America and he was proud to be part of the Special Operations community." Fernandez was a native of El Paso, and he gave his life for the greatest country in the history of the world.

I want to mention another group of people out there, and then start to conclude this. There is another group of people out there that are not even American citizens. They are called foreign nationals. Now, I know that it is real easy to bash illegal immigrants, and lately there has been a lot of that. A lot of it is deserved. I understand the debate. I am not trying to take sides in a debate, here.

But I am saying that there are people who are not even citizens of this country who believe so strongly, who believe so strongly in the American dream that they have enlisted in our forces. Now, somewhere around the range of 10 have given their lives, have been killed in the line of duty fighting for the United States of America, even though not citizens of the United States of America, because they believe in the principles and the values and the freedom and the fairness and the justice for all. They believe in what our great country has done for its people, and more importantly, more importantly, these people believe in what our country has done for the world and has done for others, our neighbors.

A Guatemala native put off college to join the Marines. Lance Corporal Jose Gutierrez, 22 years old, rifleman with the Marines, born in Guatemala, held permanent U.S. resident status which he obtained in 1991.

Those people, those foreign nationals who signed up to serve in our military, those foreign nationals who have made the ultimate sacrifice, we need to know that the respect of this country goes well beyond our borders; that there are people throughout this world that would do anything to become American citizens, to help further the dream that our forefathers had when they first put this country together. Lance Corporal Jose Gutierrez was one of those. By the way, I should tell the Members that the United States now, in recognition of his sacrifice, made him in citizen of the United States.

I want to put up one other poster. This is called "Freedom". I want Members to know I did not author this, but Fred Thompson, a U.S. Senator, former United States Senator, has a TV commercial, or has put this on the TV. I am not sure who the author is, but I did not do it. I think the words are so explicit and say so much.

In conclusion of my remarks, I wanted to read a letter, but I wanted to go through this. Just go through with me.

"Freedom

"It is the soldier, not the campus organizer, who has given us the freedom to demonstrate.

"It is the soldier, not the reporter, who has given us the freedom of press.

"It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us the freedom of speech.

"It is the soldier who serves under the flag who defends the protester's right to burn the flag.

"Isn't it time now to demonstrate that we support our troops? Were it not for the brave, there will be no land of the free."

Finally, I want to conclude with a letter. This letter was written to "Mom". The young man is from the State of Nevada. This letter was actually published in a newspaper.

"Dear Mom, it's really your decision to march if you want to or not. You are the one who has to decide if what we are doing out here is right or wrong. My opinion is not yours.

"I do, however, have things I would like for you and Grandma and everyone else at home to know.

"I am a United States soldier. I was sworn to defend my country against all enemies, foreign and domestic. People may not agree with the things we are ordered to do. I would like to address those people by telling them that terrorism is not a threat to us as Americans but to many other innocent people in the world.

"What type of country would we be if we didn't defend the rights and freedoms of others, not because they're Americans, but how about just because they're human?

"We live in a country where people feel secure with their daily lives. They

do business like usual and don't worry about the thought of terrorism actually happening to them.

"The people of 9/11 thought the same thing. We now know that it can happen to anyone at any time.

"Yet as Americans we're afraid of losing our soldiers to defend our security. I can only speak for myself when I say that my life is an easy expense to ensure that my family and my friends can live in peace.

"I strongly believe in what we are doing and wish you were here to see for yourselves the honor and privilege that American soldiers aboard this ship are feeling, knowing that we are going to be a part of something so strong and so meaningful to the safety of our loved ones. Then you would know what this potential war is about.

"We will stand tall in front of terrorism and defeat it. We as soldiers are not afraid of what may happen. We are only afraid of Americans not being able to understand why we are here.

"I ask for your courage as Americans to be strong for us; I ask for your understanding in what we believe is right. I ask for your support in what we are sworn to do: defend our country and the life of all.

"We will succeed in our task and we will end the threat of terrorism in our backyard. We will also end the threat of terrorism in our neighbors'.

"We have to remind ourselves of what this country stands for: life, liberty, and justice for all. In order to maintain those rights, we have to stop this threat. I am proud to be here. I will be coming home, but not until I know that it is safe for all Americans and for everyone that I love.

"My family is first. My country is where they live. I will defend it." This is a 20-year-old Navy corpsman, 20 years old and writes like that.

It is with a great deal of pride that I have that bumper sticker on the back of my pickup, "This is America: Love it or leave it." I want all of my colleagues, when they go back, to know that the belief and support of the American people is behind the military forces of America; that by far the greatest majority of Americans feel good to be Americans. They feel proud of this Nation, and they not only feel honored by our troops, they feel that our troops are acting for a noble purpose.

□ 2145

And they see these troops as real heroes, not sports celebrities, not famous people, not Hollywood actresses but as real true heroes. And there frankly are a lot of people who have put down their signs in protest and have picked up signs supporting our force. Those people who are carrying the disgraceful sign that they support our troops as long as they shoot their officers are a disgraceful bunch. I guess you get some bad apples in every bushel. But the fact is we live in the greatest country in the history of the world. And I, for my

own small part, feel very, very privileged, very privileged to have been born or to be a citizen or to have as fellow citizens people who have come into this country in the United States of America. Just take a look at the last words we have got: "Were it not for the brave, there would be no land of the free."

HISPANIC HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURGESS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing the opportunity to be here tonight.

This month is health care month and I wanted to take the opportunity to come up here tonight to talk a little bit about health care. And as chairman of the National Hispanic Congressional Caucus, I wanted to specifically emphasize Hispanic health care. I want to thank also my colleagues who are both on the Hispanic Caucus who have been working extremely hard in the area of health care, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GONZALEZ) and others.

Hispanics are now the fastest-growing population in the United States and comprise 13 percent of the total population. Yet they continue to suffer disproportionately from health disparities and face many barriers in access to quality health care. Over 33 percent of the Hispanics are uninsured. That is one out of every three find themselves without access to insurance, compared to 10 percent of the non-Hispanic whites. Let me just add that the uninsured population continues to grow, continues to become even worse as with the economy as well as with the fact that we have not been supportive of some of those programs.

And I would also add that those people who are uninsured are the ones that are out there. They are working Americans trying to make ends meet but find themselves working in small companies, find themselves working in rural America, find themselves not working for a major corporation or governments, so they find themselves without access to insurance. Yet, they are working. They do not qualify for Medicaid because they are not poor enough because they are making money, but then they do not qualify for Medicare either because they are not senior enough. So here they are in between, working Americans, yet find themselves unable to afford health care. Yet in a country that has the best health care system in the world, it is not affordable; and it is not accessible to working Americans.

When it comes to children, the numbers are equally sad. Hispanic children have the highest uninsured rate in the United States, with the child population one out of every four, 24.1 per-

cent. So we have a situation that not only hits the uninsured but it also hits the most vulnerable, our children. Over 35 percent of all Hispanic children depend on State Children's Health Insurance, or what we have call the SCHIP program, for health care needs.

We know that the uninsured have limited access to care. And we also know that the uninsured suffer disproportionately from diseases that can be prevented, treated and even cured. And that is what is so sad, some of these diseases can be prevented; some of these diseases can be treated and some can be cured. And then I look at the numbers where I see the statistics that show that in 1 year an estimated 2 million Hispanics were diagnosed with diabetes and another 1 million were estimated to have undiagnosed diabetes. And so here now we have the data to be able to diagnose diabetes at a very early age. We have the information. We have the potential of making a difference. We have the capability of being able to provide the data that is needed.

And I want to let you know that in the area of diabetes, I have been well educated in that area. When I served in the Texas House, I was in the public health committee, and I recall very distinctly finding out the data. When we looked at the disease, diabetes, at the number of people that go blind, the number of amputees usually as a result of diabetes, a large percentage of them, and, ironically, enough, in those areas it is an area that can be prevented, especially now that we can diagnose it at an early age, where we can work with those youngsters, work with those families so they do not have to suffer later on where they might lose a limb or go blind.

We also have when we see statistics that show 20 percent of persons living with AIDS are Hispanics, we know we have a serious problem if we do not start to address the state of Hispanic health with targeted prevention programs, treatment programs. With the strains that the health care system is currently experiencing, then we will have even more dramatic problems.

In the area of AIDS, we have made some significant strides. In fact, the data show that the numbers overall have been going down, and that is good and the statistics have shown it. But when it comes to minorities, especially African American and Hispanics, we find within ourselves it is growing disproportionately. And so AIDS has not gone away. It is still there. It is still a killer, and it is still one of the areas that we need to concentrate on. And it is also an area where we identify it as one of those infectious diseases such as tuberculosis that we really need to concentrate on, no matter whether it exists in this country or anywhere else. So eventually we will have to deal with it. So it becomes important that we zero in on AIDS and see what we can do.

One of things I wanted to mention about AIDS is that in our Hispanic

community throughout this country one of the difficulties is that a lot of communities have what we call community-based organizations, and we have a few but our programs were not initially, we do not have as many as other community groups do. And so you find in the Hispanic community a lack of community-based organizations that are not funded. You have some groups, but they do not have sufficient resources. And so when they try to compete for the Federal dollars, for the State dollars, they find themselves a disadvantage because they were not there from the very beginning; they were not there when these other organizations were given these seeds monies to be able to start those programs to be able to make a difference.

I also wanted to take this opportunity also to talk a little bit about the Hispanic Health Improvement Act. Through the caucus, we organized, the Hispanic Congressional Caucus, has organized based on task forces. We have a task force that is headed by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS), but we have worked on that task force to come up with our own Hispanic Health Improvement Act; and we have been working on this for some time now. It is a comprehensive bill aimed at improving Hispanic health in the United States. The legislation offers a variety of strategies for expanding health care coverage, for improving access and affordability, which is key, for also reducing health disparities as well as strengthening our Nation's health care workforce.

Let me just add that this particular piece of legislation is a piece of legislation that I have personally been working on for a little bit since I came up here almost 6 years ago; and it has evolved into a piece of legislation that is pretty comprehensive over all and touches on a lot of areas that the Hispanic community has been encountering and the difficulties in the disparities. One of the things that we did about a year ago was we did a conference where we asked every Member, both Republican and Democrat, that had any significant number of Hispanics in their districts, we invited them to a conference, and we had the conference in San Antonio. We had great participation, not only from the legislature, but also from each of the Members' staff. We invited one or two members from each of the staffs. And there we were able to come up with additional recommendations that were extremely helpful in beginning to finalize our piece of legislation and begin to address the responses that we needed in order to make that happen.

This legislation provides for the expansion of the successful State Children's Health Insurance Program, which is known as SCHIP, to cover the uninsured low-income pregnant women and parents. Right now the SCHIP as we well know does not cover women that are pregnant, that are uninsured; and we also know the importance of